



STAIRS, LANDING, HANDRAILS AND GUARDRAILS

The Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VUSBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC) provide the requirements for stairs, handrails and guardrails, regardless if they are interior or exterior.

STAIRS

1. Stairs must be at least 36" wide at all places above the handrail.
2. Stairs shall have at least 6'-8" of headroom measured vertically above the nose of each riser.
3. Stair risers shall not exceed 8-1/4". The stair riser variation shall not exceed 3/8" from the tallest to the shortest in a flight of stairs.
4. Stair treads shall be at least 9" deep. The stair tread variation shall not exceed 3/8" from the longest to the shortest in a flight of stairs.

LANDINGS

1. Landings are required at the top and bottom of all stairs, except at the top of an interior stairs (provided a door does not swing over the stair).
2. Landings are required on both sides of an *exit* door.
3. Landings are required on both sides of all *exterior* doors, except a landing is not required on the outside of a door if there is less than three risers.
4. Landings are to be at least 36" in length, measured in the direction of travel.
5. A door between the house and the garage is considered an interior door, and no landing is required at the top of the stairs on the garage side provided the security door does not swing over the landing (a screen door may swing over the landing).

Definitions

Exit door: all dwellings are required to have at least one exit door which provides direct egress from the habitable space to the outside (without going through the garage or screen porch).

Exterior door: All other doors, which lead directly or indirectly to the outside.

HANDRAILS

1. Handrails are required on at least one side all stairs with four or more risers.
2. Handrail height must be between 34"-38" measured vertically above the nosing of the stair.
3. Handrails must be continuous for the full height of the stair (from a point directly above the top riser to a point directly above the bottom riser).
4. Handrails must return to a wall or terminate at a newel post except that the handrail may be interrupted by a newel post at a turn.
5. Handrails are required to project at least 1-1/2' inches for knuckle clearance from the wall.
6. Handrails shall be graspable and the actual sizes and shapes are defined on page 3 of our *How To Build a Deck Guide*.

GUARDRAILS

1. Guardrails are required on all porches, balconies, open-sided stairways or raised floor surfaces located more than 30" above the adjacent grade or floor.
2. Guardrails shall extend vertically and be at least 36" above the walking surface, or grade.
3. Guardrails are required on screened porches or decks where the walking surface is more than 30" above the adjacent floor or grade.
4. Guardrails shall be constructed to withstand at least 200# of force in any direction.
5. Guardrails shall have pickets close enough that a 4" diameter sphere will not pass through.